

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT EC BRUSSELS 10941 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ALL EC CAPITALS, LISBON DTD 08 NOV 76.

QTE: CONFIDENTIAL EC BRUSSELS 10941

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TAGS: EEC, ECON, PO

SUBJECT: EC-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS

REFS: (A) LISBON 7536: (B) EC BRUSSELS 9425: (C) EC BRUSSELS 9235

1. COMMENTING TO MISSION OFFICER NOVEMBER 4 ON OCTOBER 28-29 EC-PORTUGUESE JOINT COMMISSION MEETING IN LISBON, EC COMMISSION DESK OFFICER FOR PORTUGAL SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO MAJOR NEW BUSINESS TO TRANSACT UNDER CURRENT EC-PORTUGAL ACCORDS. MAIN REASON FOR MEETING WAS PORTUGUESE DESIRE TO GIVE PUBLIC IMPRESSION OF GATHERING MOMENTUM IN EC-PORTUGAL RELATIONS. TO THAT END PORTUGUESE HAD ORIGINALLY REQUESTED THAT SEPTEMBER 20 SIGNING OF ACCORDS AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL (REFS A AND C) TAKE PLACE IN LISBON.

EC HAD RESISTED TAKING NINE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS AND THEIR STAFFS TO LISBON FOR THAT PURPOSE BUT HAD AGREED INSTEAD TO HOLD A JOINT COMMISSION MEETING IN LISBON IN EARLY NOVEMBER TO "REVIEW PROGRESS" IN EC-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS.

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2. COMMISSION OFFICIAL SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN NOTHING URGENTLY REQUIRING TWO SIDES' ATTENTION, LISBON VISIT WAS NONETHELESS VERY USEFUL IN THAT IR PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMISSION TEAM, HEADED BY ROLAND DEKERGORLAY, ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL OF COMMISSION'S DG I (EXTERNAL RELATIONS) TO: (A) ASSESS FALTERING PORTUGUESE ECONOMY; (B) TAKE FURTHER SOUNDINGS ON GOP PLANS FOR PRESENTING APPLICATION FOR EC MEMBERSHIP; AND (C) MAKE PORTUGUESE AWARE OF HOW THEIR ECONOMY MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY MEMBERSHIP AND PROBABLE LIMITS OF ASSISTANCE PORTUGAL COULD EXPECT FROM COMMUNITY UNDER AN ENHANCED EC-PORTUGAL RELATIONSHIP. ALTHOUGH NOT PRESENT AT SOME RESTRICTED SESSIONS AT WHICH MEMBERSHIP QUESTION WAS DISCUSSED, COMMISSION'S DESK OFFICER SAYS HIS SUPERIORS CAME AWAY FROM MEETINGS BELIEVING THAT PORTUGUESE WILL NOT DELAY APPLICATION FOR EC MEMBERSHIP BEYOND LATE SPRING UNLESS, WHEN SOARES MAKES HIS PROMISED ROUNDS OF EC CAPITALS, HE IS GIVEN A FLAT TURNDOWN BY A MAJORITY OF EC GOVERNMENTS, WHICH COMMISSION THINKS UNLIKELY. ACCORDING TO COMMISSION OFFICIAL, SOARES HAS POSTPONED HIS TORU FROM OCTOBER-NOVEMBER TO EARLY NEXT YEAR BECAUSE FRENCH AND SOME OTHER (UNNAMED) EC MEMBERS, FEARING THAT MEMBERSHIP FOR AN ECONOMICALLY WEAK PORTUGAL WILL ENTAIL AN UNACCEPTABLE DRAWIN ON THE COMMUNITY'S ECONOMIC RESOURCES, HAVE RECENTLY EXPRESSED LACK OF ENTHUSIASM ABOUT EARLY PORTUGUESE ACCESSION REQUEST. SOARES REASONED, IT IS THOUGHT, THAT HIS HAND WOULD BE STRENGTHENED IN DISCUSSIONS WITH EC GOVERNMENTS IF TIMED AFTER PORTUGAL'S DECEMBER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, WHICH SOARES HOPES WILL DEMONSTRATE FURTHER PROGRESS/ STABILITY OF FLEDGING PORTUGUESE DEMOCRACY.

3. COMMISSION OFFICIAL SAID IT IS HIS IMPRESSION THAT IN RESTRICTED TALKS IN LISBON OCTOBER 28-29 HIS SUPERIORS MADE IT CLEAR THAT GIVEN PORTUGAL'S "PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES" -- I.E., A COUNTRY WITH A STRUGGLING ECONOMY NOT READY FOR FULL INTEGRATION INTO THE EC BUT WITH A MANIFEST NEED FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES -- IT MIGHT BE WORTH THE GOP'S CONSIDERING AN ENHANCED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EC WHICH, WHILE NOT CONSTITUTING FULL MEMBERSHIP IN THE NEAR TERM, WOULD, CONFIDENTIAL

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NONETHLESS, BE SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY MORE THAT THE VARIOUS ASSOCIATION AGREEMENTS THE EC HAS ENTERED WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES (EC BRUSSELS 9425), AND WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT STAGE EN ROUTE TO FULL MEMBERSHIP. THIS OFFICIAL SPECULATES THAT IT WILL BE THIS AS YET UNDEFINED "IN BETWEEN" STATUS WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE MAIN GROUND FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN EC MEMBER STATES, THE GOP AND THE EC COMMISSION IN QUIET CONVERSATIONS OVER THE COMING MONTHS.HINTON

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